

Sessions – Animals – myfishbites.com

Intro

Sometimes people ask whether there will be animals in heaven...

My answer is that of course there will be! If you think about the account of Noah's Ark, God told Noah to take animals with him so that he could look after the animals. God made the earth with animals in it and so when he re-creates everything at the end of time (as it says in Revelation), I'm sure there will be animals too! They bring so much happiness and love to so many people!

In Isaiah 11 it talks about a time when the wolf and the lamb will hang out and when the leopard and the baby goat will lie down together, the calf and the lion together, the cow will graze with the bear. It also says there will be a child there too, totally safe. If you've ever seen animals like bears and lions, you'll know that this will be different to how things are now! It seems pretty clear to me that there will be animals in the new heaven and earth that God creates.

DVD Clip - Shrek DVD, Chapter 2.



Timings: 04:46 (when donkey's owner is trying to sell him) - 11:11 (when Shrek shuts the door on donkey who says, "I'm all alone, there's no-one here beside me").

Numbers 22.21-38

Did you know that the movie Shrek was a bit behind its time!! Shrek had a talking donkey. But back in Numbers 22, we find that the Bible stars a talking donkey (and no, his voice over wasn't done by Eddie Murphy, it was really a donkey speaking!)

Read some or all of this below:

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.

Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?'

Balaam answered the donkey, 'You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you here and now.' The donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?' 'No,' he said.

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell face down.

The angel of the Lord asked him, 'Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.' Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, 'I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.' The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.' So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. Balak said to Balaam, 'Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?' 'Well, I have come to you now,' Balaam replied. 'But I can't say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.'

Link



<https://youtu.be/8MBF6fZivl4>

The link is to a news story about how troops in Afghanistan are befriending and taking on local dogs - helping both the troops and the dogs. This is also raising animal care issues in Afghanistan too.

Caring and caring for animals

Some people aren't into having pets like dogs and cats etc and that's fine. We're all different. But if people really don't like animals (or children!) then there's probably something wrong!

In the Bible reading we hear about Balaam and his donkey. Balaam was angry because his donkey wasn't doing what he wanted. He then ended up taking out his frustration on his donkey by beating her. This kind of thing happens in life, with people taking their own anger and frustration out on innocent animals and innocent people. It is wrong. The Bible tells us that we should not go to bed angry. If we are angry, it shows there is something wrong with us and not other people. The good news is that God can help us choose not to be angry if we ask him.

In the story of Balaam, the donkey squeezed Balaam's foot against a wall and so he beat the donkey again. Then the donkey lay down refusing to move forward so Balaam beat her for a third time. He was not happy (nor was the donkey!)

The reason the donkey didn't move forward like Balaam wanted was because the donkey could see the angel of the Lord in front of her. (The 'angel of the Lord' often refers to Jesus before he came to the earth as a man). No wonder the donkey stopped. The donkey could see something that Balaam couldn't. There have been all kinds of stories about dogs rescuing their owners from fires, dialing 999 (having been trained to) in emergencies and looking after people with different conditions.

In some football matches, fans would shout abuse at other players saying 'ee-or' (a bit like a donkey) to show that the player was stupid. Donkeys are often seen as a bit more stupid. In the story of Balaam it wasn't the donkey who was stupid, it was Balaam...! And often that is like us. We are the ones who don't get it or don't see things as they are.

Sometimes on TV you see these adverts showing very sorry looking animals (like donkeys) because of the way they have been treated. It's not nice to watch but you can see how animals do suffer. Again, it is very wrong and we should stand against suffering or abuse of any innocent person or animal. In the Balaam and donkey incident, we find that the angel of the Lord actually enabled the donkey to speak her mind. She said, 'What have I done to you to make you beat me three times?' The donkey even went on to explain what a good donkey she had been! What makes me laugh about the whole thing is that when the donkey spoke to Balaam, he didn't even seem shocked but just spoke back to her!! Imagine how you'd feel if your dog suddenly started speaking to you!

After this, the angel of the Lord opened Balaam's eyes to see him and Balaam understandably fell on the floor! Amazingly, Balaam wasn't a prophet of God (he wasn't a 'Christian') and yet when he saw the angel of the Lord, he confessed that he had sinned (done wrong). If people around us who don't know God really meet him, they won't be able to help but to say sorry and want to turn their lives around. Through

history people have met with God in what are called 'revivals' so much that even hardened miners or sailors meet God and are totally changed!

And this should be our response when we get angry or do anything that is wrong. We need to say sorry to God. It's a good thing to say sorry quickly, to really mean it and to ask God not to help you to do that wrong thing again.

In verse 30 we read the angel of the Lord say this to Balaam, *"The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."*

So the donkey actually ended up saving Balaam's life. When he thought the animal was doing something wrong or annoying and got angry, the donkey was actually doing something that saved Balaam's life! Often animals are way more sensitive than humans - birds can sense disasters coming and fly away; dogs can sense or smell danger long before we can etc. As well as this, the angel of the Lord had compassion on the donkey and this shows us the heart of God. He is loving and kind and good. It may not always seem that way but it is true.

We also learn that Balaam said that he could only speak what God put in his mouth! If only we had that same kind of attitude and commitment. If we just spoke God's words (the Bible), God's love, God's truth in ways that helped people and didn't make them feel condemned it would be amazing. Make that a prayer for yourself - that you would only speak what God puts in your mouth. Imagine all the hassle it would save you with your mates and parents. And imagine how you'd help other people and see Jesus change their lives!

The Bible verses tell us that we should care for animals; that we shouldn't get angry; that we should ask God to help us to only speak his words; that often there is a higher and better purpose being worked out than the one we can see (the Bible says that God works all things for good for those who love him and are called by him).

Finally, we should understand that situations aren't always what they seem and we know that God cares for all his creation - first of all us as humans and then animals and all creation. And remember, we are not simply developed apes. That is a lie. The Bible tells us way back in Genesis 2 that God breathed his breath (his life, his 'spirit') into mankind, and only into mankind. We are unique and therefore we have unique responsibilities in loving God, loving people, loving animals and loving God's creation.